

Message Text

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SUBJECT: JANATA VIMUKTI PERAMUNA (JVP) HOLDS FIRST RALLY SINCE
INSURGENCY

REF: COLOMBO 0703

1. SUMMARY. IN THEIR FIRST PUBLIC MEETING SINCE THEY CARRIED
OUT A BLODDY, UNSUCCESSFUL INSURGENCY IN 1971, THE JANATA
VIMUKTI PERAMUNA (JVP) ATTRACTED A LARGE, ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD
WHICH CHEERED THE SPEAKERS' DEMANDS FOR THE RELEASE OF
PARTY SECRETARY ROHANA WIJEWEERA AND OTHERS, THE REMISSION
OF THE DEATH SENTENCES IMPOSED IN ORDINARY CRIMINAL COURTS
ON TWO INSURGENTS, AND THE
RELEASE OF TAMILS SUSPECTED OF A 1975 POLITICAL ASSASSINATION.
THE JVP SPEAKERS ATTACKED ALL THE OTHER POLITICAL
PARTIES BUT WERE PARTICULARLY HARD ON THE GOVERNMENT , CITING
POLICE AND ARMY EXCESSES DURING THE INSURGENCY. MEANWHILE,
A SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY-AFFILIATED GROUP OF EX-INSURGENTS
HAS CHALLENGED THE JVP'S CLAIM TO REPRESENT THE 1971 REBELS,
ARGUING THAT THEIR ORGANIZATION CONTAINS THE ONLY STILL ACTIVE
MEMBER OF THE JVP POLITBURO. ANOTHER INSURGENT-BASED POLITICAL
PARTY, THE MAHAJANA VIMUKTI PAKSHAYA (MVP) IS NEGOTIATING
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WITH OTHER LEFT PARTIES AND WILL PROBABLY JOIN SOME
UNITED LEFT COALITION. IT IS CLEAR THAT MEMORIES OF THE
INSURGENCY WILL PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN THE COMING ELECTION
THAN HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED, ALTHOUGH THE JVP HAS NOT
ANNOUNCED WHETHER OR NOT IT WILL RUN CANDIDATES. END
SUMMARY.

2. LEGALIZED AGAIN BY THE ENDING OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY FEBRUARY 15, THE JVP, ARCHITECT OF THE VIOLENT YOUTH INSURRECTION OF APRIL 1971, HELD ITS FIRST PUBLIC MEETING IN SIX YEARS AT COLOMBO'S HYDE PARK MAR. 11. THE LARGE AND YOUTHFUL CROWD, ESTIMATED BY EMBASSY PERSONNEL AT BETWEEN 5 AND 10,000 WAS PARTY SWELLED BY WORKERS FROM NEARBY OFFICES AND BY CURIOSITY-SEEKERS. NEVERTHELESS IT WAS AN ENTHUSIASTIC AND SYMPATHETIC GROUP.

3. AS IN PRE-INSURGENCY DAYS, JVP SPEAKERS WERE NOTABLY ELOQUENT AND EMOTIONAL. STANDING BEFORE A BACKDROP WITH LARGE PICTURES OF MARX, LENIN AND ENGELS, THEY CALLED FOR RELEASE OF THOSE REBELS (INCLUDING LEADER ROHANA WUJEWEEA) CONVICTED AND STILL IN JAIL. REMISSION OF THE DEATH SENTENCES IMPOSED IN ORDINARY CRIMINAL COURTS ON TWO INSURGENTS, AND RELEASE OF THE TAMIL YOUTHS CHARGED WITH THE 1975 ASSASSINATION OF THE PRO-GOVERNMENT MAYOR OF JAFFNA. THIS LAST DEMAND IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE JVP'S NEW ATTEMPT TO ATTRACT TAMIL SUPPORT.

4. CLEARLY INTENDING TO GO IT ALONE FOR THE TIME BEING, THE JVP VERBALLY ATTACKED EVERYONE ELSE OK THE POLITICAL SCENE. ACTING PARTY SECRETARY UPATISSA GAMANAYAKE, IN A LONG ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION, SAID THAT THE LANKA SAMASAMAJA PARTY (LSSP) AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY (CP) HAD DISTORTED MARXISM-LENINISM. BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONAL PARTY AND THE SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY, THERE WAS NO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CHOICE, SINCE BOTH REPRESENTED THE PRIVILEGED CLASSES, RATHER THAN THE OPPRESSED. THE JVP ALSO DID NOT APPROVE OF THE OTHER PARTY OF EX-INSURGENTS, THE MVP, WITH WHICH THEY WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO.

5. THE JVP SPEAKERS WERE MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN DISCUSSING POLICE AND ARMY BRUTALITY DURING THE INSURGENCY. DEPICTING IN VIVID DETAIL RAPES AND MURDERS COMMITTED BY SECURITY FORCES, THE SPEAKERS REPORTEDLY MOVED THEIR AUDIENCE TO TEARS. POINTING OUT THAT THEY WERE NOT AWARE OF ALL SUCH EXCESSES, THEY ASKED THEIR LISTENERS TO REPORT FURTHER DETAILS OF WHICH THEY MIGHT BE AWARE. THIS WAS APPARENTLY IN FURTHERANCE OF THE JVP'S REPORTED INTENTION TO COMPILE A CENSUS OF THOSE INSURGENTS KILLED IN 1971.

6. WITH THE REVIVAL OF THE JVP, THE SLFP'S ATLKMPT TO BRING EX-INSURGENTS INTO ITS FOLD IS THREATENED. THE PARTY'S SOLIDARITY FRONT, FORMED BY ANURA BANDARANAIKE,

ISSUED A PRESS STATEMENT BEFORE THE JVP RALLY, QUESTIONING THE RIGHT OF THE ORGANIZERS TO RE-FORM THE JVP. THE STATEMENT CLAIMED THAT THE ONLY PARTY POLITBURO MEMBER STILL IN POLITICS AND NOT IN JAIL IS A SOLODARITY FRONT MEMBER AND IMPLIED THAT THE NEW JVP LEADERS WERE OPPORTUNITISTS "STEERED BY AN UNSEEN REACTIONARY FORCE".

7. MEANWHILE THE MVP AND ITS LEADER MAHINDA WIJESEKERA ARE REPORTED TO BE HAVING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LSSP, CP, MAHAJANA EKSATH PERAMUNA, AND NANDA ELLAWALA'S PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC PRITY, AS PARTY OF THE EFFORT TO FORM A UNITED LEFT COALITION.

8. COMMENT: THE BURGEONING OF EX-INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE RESPONSIVE CHORD THEY APPPEAR TO BE STRIKING MEANS THAT THE INSURGENCY WILL PLAY A BIGGER ROLE IN THE COMING ELECTION CAMPAIGN THAN THE PRIME MINISTER HAD IMAGINED
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OR WANTED WHEN SHE ALLOWED THE EMERGENCY TO LAPSE LAST MONTH. THE EFFECT OF THE NEW JVP PROPAGANDA IS HARD TO JUDGE NOW ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE THE KNOCKS FOR THE BRUTALITY INVOLVED IN PUTTING DOWNVGH E INSURGENCY. (ON THE OTHER HAND, SUCH BRUTALITY WILL BE PUT INTO THE BROADER CONTEXT OF JVP VIOLENCE BY THOSE WHO LIVED THROUGH THE BLOODY DAYS OF APRIL 1971.) THE PM MAY ATTEMPT TO BLUNT THEIR CRITICISM BY PARDONING SOME OF THE INSURGENTS.

9. THE JVP WAS CAREFUL TO DENY THAT IT IS PLANNING ANOTHER VIOLENT UPRISING AND SAID THAT IT HAD TOLD ITS FOLLOWERS NOT TO ARM THEMSELVES OR ENGAGE IN ROBBERY. NEVERTHELESS, WITH THE ORGANIZATION'S PAST HISTORY, IT WILL HAVE TO PROVE OVER TIME THAT IT HAS TURNED OVER A NEW LEAF. MEANWHILE ITS IMMEDIATE FURTURE IS UNCERTAIN. UNLIKE NUMEROUS OTHER LEFTIST GROUPS,WHICH HAVE ANNOUNCED GRANDIOSE ELCTION PLANS, THE JVP HAS NOT YET INDICATED WHETHER IT WILL RUN CANDIDATES THIS YEAR. END COMMENT.
REED

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